



what is research? /wɒt/ɪz/riːsɪtʃ/

WHAT IS RESEARCH FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A HISTORIAN?

History is written from a set of facts. The information that survives gives a picture of what went on at a particular moment in history. Research involves looking at that information, and any evidence that survives, in order to ascertain what happened. As a historian you are asked to shape these facts into logical and objective arguments.

EXPLORE THE EVIDENCE Available evidence is the key; remember a historian is only as good as his/her source material. It is important to learn to question everything you read. New information is constantly being researched and new findings may change the story. That is why you should try and get the most up to date book on your subject. You must examine the historian's agenda anytime that you are studying a historical event. Remember that everyone's writing is informed by their particular set of circumstances and their place in history. Therefore, always look at when a book was written. Even the work of established historians must be challenged. The piece you are using as source material may have been written many years before you read it and the information may be outdated. A historian's work can even be outdated by the time it is published. Remember you are asked to draw your own conclusions from the facts. If in doubt about the source material – **QUERY IT - GIVE YOUR OPINION** – and you are on your way to being a historian, to developing a questioning and enquiring mind.

remember historical knowledge is tentative and incomplete subject to revision and reinterpretation ... history is everchanging - our perception of events and characters can be radically altered as new evidence comes to light.

what is research? continued

READ A WIDE VARIETY OF SOURCES A variety of sources will reflect a range of views. Bear in mind that there are many sides to every story. You may have what is claimed to be the definitive book but it is only one opinion. Note the strengths or weaknesses of what you have read, some evidence is better than other evidence.

QUERY! Too often we do not assess the information we are given. We have become used to simply receiving knowledge and can forget that learning is about looking at material in a critical way. Objectivity is the key. Just because something appears in print does not mean that it is accurate or truthful.

ESTABLISH THE ARGUMENT! Every piece of writing has a principal aim or objective. It is important to keep in mind which evidence is relevant to your theme and which follows a logical line of argument. The material selected must be relevant to the question posed or the aspect of the particular event about which you have chosen to write. While researching quotes must be chosen which are in keeping with your argument. **Avoid quotations without explanation.**

remember sources and evidence must be from a valid and reputable source

remember historical writing is based on reliable evidence and (a range of sources must be used and the contents must be

IN YOUR RESEARCH - KEEP IN MIND - THAT HISTORY IS AFFECTED BY

Change & continuity: It is important to examine the events of the past in the light of both 'change' and 'continuity' to review how the actions of an individual or a collective affected society. The continuity of events and how this was governed by chance is an important aspect of the writing of history.

Course & consequence: History is a series of events and how these events occurred. We analyse key players and the result of their decisions and actions. It must be remembered that although events may appear to have happened in isolation, the actions of people, the events of a town or a country, can have a part to play in the broader picture.

evidence that may be open to more than one valid interpretation)

backed up and questioned (it often *in* frame) an argument?